

Christian Ott Elementary

Christian Ott Elementary, located in historic Independence, Missouri, is a school rich in tradition. The school originated in 1885 and was named in honor of Christian Ott, Sr., a member of the Board of Education. The current facility was built in 1955 and was renovated in 2003. One of thirteen elementary schools in the Independence School District, today Christian Ott Elementary is home to 460 students in grades PreK-5.

Christian Ott Elementary's educational journey is best represented by organizational learning and change. Throughout the years, formal mission and vision statements have been formulated, revised, and then revised again to meet the changing needs of our community and students. In 2002, Christian Ott joined the Missouri Accelerated Schools Project and in 2003, Christian Ott experienced additional change as it embraced the tenets of Missouri Professional Learning Communities.

As part of Christian Ott Elementary's journey toward fulfilling our vision, traditional teaching methods have given way to research-based strategies based on best practice. The staff has created a culture of and reputation for academic excellence. A governance structure encourages shared decision-making and enables teachers to take leadership roles through content cadres and at the district level as curriculum design team members. Teachers collaborate regularly on the use of best instructional practices within their grade levels and through vertical teaming. Teachers also use action research as they help diagnose, plan, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives within our school improvement efforts. Teacher leaders and others offer professional development to our staff during the school year. Staff members also attend summer professional development aligned to building and district goals. Student assessment data is gathered regularly at all grade levels to determine patterns in student learning and to monitor classroom instruction, as the staff is tireless in the quest to challenge, assist, and encourage students to become the best that they can be. A Title I school, Christian Ott offers a pyramid of interventions and a student-focused Counselor, Administrator, Resource, and Educator (CARE) team to provide students with additional supports such as small-group tutoring before, during, and after school. Through a joint effort with William Chrisman High School, A+ Program students serve as positive role models and offer additional tutoring support. Christian Ott also partners with Park University in Parkville, Missouri, to provide hands-on classroom experience and mentoring to university student interns eager to enter the teaching profession.

Character education is an important part of Christian Ott's curriculum and is embedded in daily instructional practices. Each grade level sponsors a special monthly, school-wide character education assembly during which the students in the grade level perform or sing a song illustrating the particular character trait taught. Two students from each of 20 classrooms are honored in front of their peers and parents for demonstrating that character trait.

Students are also recognized each month through Ott's Congratulations, You've Been Successful! (CUBS) program. Each student's individual strengths, talents, and progress toward learning goals are celebrated through special school-wide and classroom activities. Christian Ott Elementary offers fun and enriching opportunities for students through its Kid's Safari before-and-after school program. Students can participate in after-school clubs such as karate, sports, games, scrap booking, dance, and cooking. Christian Ott Elementary believes in the importance of early education through its Child and family Learning Center, offering early learning opportunities to students ages 3-5 through a partnership with Head Start as well as an active parents as First Teachers program.

In 2006, Christian Ott Elementary's tradition of excellence continued as the school was found to be exemplary in its demonstration of professional learning community indicators by the Missouri Accelerated Schools/Professional Learning Communities Resource Center. In 2006, one of Christian Ott Elementary's early learning teachers was named Story Reader's Preschool Teacher of the Year for the state of Missouri. Later this same year, the Independence School District was accredited with "Distinction in Performance" from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, earning a perfect score from the state. A strong and active PTA that recently celebrated 100% membership, as well as a newly-formed Site Council support the school's endeavors and commitment to excellence.